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How to talk to my teen

Bring some connection and fun into your conversations with your teen



Learn from parenting expert Dr Justin Coulson on how to talk to your teen. Bring some connection and fun into your conversations with your teen. Dr Coulson explains how to have the ‘big’ conversations with your teen.

[Music]

Justin: So many parents tell me “I just can’t talk to my teenager”. Whenever I hear that from a parent, I ask a couple of important questions. First of all, when are you trying to talk to them?

Secondly, what is the nature of the conversation? Like what are you trying to talk to them about? And third, what’s your tone? What’s your approach? Sometimes we just come in too hard at our kids. We say “well how was your day? Hey, answer me. This is the third time I’ve asked you. I hate it when you ignore me.” What happens is wherever we start emotionally, our children will meet us there or they’ll go higher. Or alternatively, they’ll just shut the door. So we want to make sure that our conversations start softly and

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gently. They want to be kind. They want to be light and fun. See so much of our conversation is about correction and direction and we need to just have more connection. More lightness. More fun. And it's these fun conversations where we get our tone and our approach right that we can then lead into other conversations.

The second thing is timing. When our kids walk in the door after a long day at school and we say "how was your day?" They're usually going to say "eh" because their minds on other things. They haven't decompressed. Most parents tell me that the best time to talk to their teenagers is at bedtime. Maybe it's in the car. Maybe it's going for a walk. Maybe we can create opportunities by going down to the local café and having a milkshake. Just having a chat with no agenda. It's this kind of a conversation that gets things moving. When we need to have big conversations, we want to start gently and even get permission. You know with my own kids, I'll often say to them something like "Hey, I want to talk to you about one of those tricky parent conversations. I want to have one of those embarrassing dad conversations. Is now a good time?"

I actually give them a heads up that I want to have this tricky conversation and what it does, ironically, instead of shutting them down, it makes them interested. Their ears prick up. They're like "Oh what do my parents want to talk to me about?" Gives them that that support for autonomy. It lets them have some control. Those three things will change the way you have conversations with your children.

[Music]

VO: You can discover more on the Spark Their Future website.

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